



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION

Agenda Item 5c

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Memorandum

TO: Legislation Committee

DATE: January 5, 2009

FR: Deputy Executive Director, Policy

RE: Toll Bridge Legislative Strategy

In December 2008, the Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA) and Caltrans presented recent analysis that revealed the need to complete a seismic retrofit on the Antioch and Dumbarton bridges at an estimated cost of \$950 million. In addition, reduced toll traffic over the past five years and the credit crisis of 2008 have led to a conclusion that additional toll funds are required to meet existing commitments.

In the interests of public safety, the region's economy, and to protect the financial health of the toll enterprise, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in its role as the Bay Area Toll Authority needs to pursue the following steps in the upcoming legislative session.

1. Seismic Safety

Amend state toll bridge seismic retrofit program to include the Dumbarton and Antioch bridges. The fundamental purpose of the seismic retrofit program is to protect public safety by strengthening or replacing seismically deficient bridge structures. The fastest path to seismic safety is to amend these projects into existing state law.

2. State Responsibility

The Bay Area toll bridges subject to the seismic retrofit program are owned and operated by the State of California. Over the past many years, Bay Area toll payers and the State of California have shared the cost at a level of approximately 60 percent and forty percent, respectively.

Given the funding crisis at the state level, we are not optimistic that we will be able to deliver additional state funds to the project. Instead, we will focus on changes in law to allow for more efficient operations in the toll bridge program. These changes include reducing the amount of overhead charges imposed by the state. Other changes would allow BATA the option to assume responsibility for manual toll collections with proper protections for Caltrans employees.

We do intend to seek federal funding for the Dumbarton and Antioch bridge retrofit projects, either in the context of the economic recovery package or the upcoming federal authorization legislation.

3. New Authority

In return for taking on additional financial commitments from Bay Area toll payers to fund state owned toll bridges, BATA will seek additional authority that coincides with this new and greater level of responsibility. This includes seeking the authority to place on the ballot future regional measures similar to Regional Measure 1 and Regional Measure 2 to obtain greater authority and flexibility over the toll structure, including congestion pricing authority and the authority to integrate the toll bridge program into a future high-occupancy toll (HOT) network in the Bay Area.

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